Hiring to Firing Podcast — The Reality of DEI Programs - A _Big Brother_ Perspective
Hosts: Tracey Diamond and Evan Gibbs
Guests: Erin Cannon

Tracey Diamond:

For today's episode, we are venturing back into the realm of reality TV. We had an episode in the past about the *Real Housewives of Salt Lake City*. Today, we're talking about *Big Brother*. So that leads to the question, Evan, of what is your favorite reality TV show?

Evan Gibbs:

You know, it's old school at this point, but I would say *Fear Factor* with Joe Rogan from back in the day. It was great seeing people having to eat all manner of things, being locked in boxes of insects and things like that. I don't think they do too much of that on *Big Brother*, but, I haven't seen it, so maybe they do.

Tracey Diamond:

I have to say that's probably one of my least favorite shows only because the thought of being anywhere near a spider or mouse just completely throws me into a frenzy. My favorite TV reality show is *Amazing Race*. And that's because I like to think about all of my family members and think about which one would be at all possible for me to go through an amazing race with.

I haven't found that right person yet, but I'm still hoping that there is one. At least you get to see the world, right?

[INTRO]

Tracey Diamond:

Welcome to *Hiring to Firing*, the podcast. I'm Tracey Diamond, labor and employment attorney at Troutman Pepper, and I'm here with my co-host, Evan Gibbs. Together, we tackle all employment issues from hiring to firing.

Today, we have a very important topic; diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. For this topic, we've invited our own Erin Cannon, who is the firm's director of diversity, equity, and inclusion, to join us. Welcome, Erin.

Erin Cannon:

Thank you, Tracey. I'm very happy to be here.

Tracey Diamond:

Well, we're really thrilled to have you here as well. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your role at Troutman and sort of what your day-to-day responsibilities are which are vast?

Erin Cannon:

Yes, absolutely. As you mentioned, I'm the director of diversity, equity, and inclusion here, and that means a whole myriad of things under that umbrella. My team and I mainly focus on creating a more inclusive and equitable culture here at Troutman Pepper, where everyone can feel a sense of belonging, regardless of their background. We work on a variety of initiatives and partnerships, both internally and externally, to advance this goal of inclusion. We really do believe that diversity comes when you focus on being inclusive and when you focus on the equitable aspects of a culture.

Evan Gibbs:

All right. Well, happy to have you today. As Tracey mentioned, we're talking about diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. So we thought a perfect jumping-off point for the discussion is the reality series *Big Brother*. For any of you who may have managed to miss all of the 20 or more seasons of the show, every season, there are 16 contestants that live together in a special house where they're watched by cameras 24/7, while they live and compete in all these various contests. Every week, two contestants are placed on the block, and ultimately, the group votes which of those two contestants should be eliminated that week. The last remaining contestant wins a pot of money. That's how the show works.

Tracey Diamond:

First of all, I'd like to thank our colleague, Taylor Washington, for introducing us to *Big Brother*. I was one of those who had missed all 20-plus seasons of the show, and also for suggesting this topic. Prior to season 23 of the show, there had been some complaints that the contestants chosen on the show were not sufficiently from underrepresented groups. When there was a non-white contestant, for example, it was usually a one-off token person. In season 23, for the first time, six of the contestants were of color. These contestants, as early as the first episode, formed an alliance that they called The Cookout. Let's listen to a clip.

[CLIP]

Speaker 1:

Everybody's meant to be here, you know? Yeah. I know what we're here to do.

Speaker 2:

And, and everything is not about the game.

Speaker 1:

It's not.

Speaker 2:

The game brought us here.

Speaker 1:

Absolutely.

Speaker 2:

The game brought us together.

Speaker 1:

We're here to also change the culture. Think about the year we just had. Man. The whole Black Lives Matter movement, like, it's important for us to be here.

Speaker 2:

And stick together.

Speaker 1:

Correct.

Speaker 3:

It is so beautiful, amazing, and historical to come into this house and see people who share my culture, who share my upbringing, who I can bond with. And the connections that I've been able to make with each and every one of them is something that I'm going to be able to take with me for the rest of my life.

[END CLIP]

Tracey Diamond:

Erin, in what ways are *Big Brother* alliances similar to and different from affinity groups that many companies have in place? First of all, what is an affinity group? Let's start there.

Erin Cannon:

Yes. An affinity group, sometimes called an employee resource group, are groups that are formed within an organization or a firm, a workplace in order for people with similar backgrounds around a specific affinity to come together. Some affinity groups are more about professional

development. Others are more about just having that safe place to have camaraderie and togetherness and that sense of belonging. It can vary by organization. Affinity groups tend to be around the different affinities that are protected classes, but that's not always the case. Sometimes, affinity groups are firm or organization-sanctioned. Sometimes, they are done kind of ad hoc by people within a community. It just depends on the specific organization, firm, et cetera for how those are actually formed and how they work.

Here at Troutman Pepper, the way that we look at affinity groups is we look at them as that place of inclusion and belonging, a place where you do get a chance to maybe decompress or hear from people who share a background with you and figure out how to come to the workplace, figure out how to feel like you belong or how to work together within that affinity. Do you want me to go into which affinity groups we have or not?

Tracey Diamond:

Sure, yes. Why don't you explain a little bit about our affinity groups here?

Erin Cannon:

Sure. We currently have six affinity groups here. We have the Black Affinity Group, we have the Women's Network Affinity Group, we have the Pride Affinity Group, we have the Latino Affinity Group, and we have the Veterans Affinity Group, and we have the AAPI Affinity Group, AAPI being Asian American Pacific Islander Affinity Group. Those are the six that we have right now. That is not to say that we can't have more in the future or that those might not change over time.

The way that we are looking at affinity groups is to have a place for people to connect personally and across different and similar backgrounds. We have recently opened up our affinity groups to be inclusive of both staff and attorneys, which I think makes it really hone in on that point of an inclusive culture. That's a little bit about the way that we approach affinity groups and what we are doing with our affinity groups here.

Evan Gibbs:

Is that pretty consistent, Erin, in your experience at other companies? Are they generally sort of structured that same way, open to most employees at the company of all levels? Or is it more confined to geographic areas, things like that?

Erin Cannon:

I love that you asked that question actually, Evan, because one of the things that is the trickiest about diversity, equity, and inclusion work is that it's so nuanced, right? Part of what makes a DEI effort work in one place is not going to make it work in another. You see this a lot when you're talking about the international DEI playing field because things are different in different places.

It's true nationally here in the US, too, and so yes and no. I see that there tend to be similar structures in place in terms of the identifiers that these groups kind of form around. But there are variations, and there are some that do things more regionally. There are some that do things

more locally and some that do things more on a global or a national scale. That's just going to depend on the organization, the firm, et cetera.

In terms of who is included, they tend to be pretty inclusive by nature of the beast. I will also mention that I said that we are open to both professional staff, as well as attorneys. We are also open to allies in certain spaces. We are really looking at how to bring the allyship piece into our work as well, and that's something that can be varied through different organizations.

Tracey Diamond:

Yes. That's what I wanted to ask you about. Can you explain a little bit more what that means to be an ally and what allyship means?

Erin Cannon:

To talk about allyship, I think we first have to level set on what it means to have different identities. Each of us as individuals have multiple identities that we hold, right? Then some of those identities were going to be the majority. I work at Troutman Pepper. It is a US-based law firm. Most of the people within Troutman Pepper are US citizens, and I am no exception. I'm in the majority there. I am also in Texas where we don't have a ton of people, and so I'm in the minority there. There are lots of different ways that we can look at our identities that come together and create who we are as individuals.

When we're talking about allyship, we're talking about the areas in which we hold majority identities and how we use the power of those majority identities to uplift people who have less power than us. For example, in the example that I just gave, if I am somebody who is from the United States, and I am seeing a struggle that maybe somebody who is not from the United States is having within my work environment, I can use the power that I have to uplift that and to help to think through how we might make our community more inclusive of somebody who is not a US citizen.

I think it's really important to think about allyship as something that each of us can do because we each have multiple identities that we hold, where we have more power or less power and can use that power to uplift.

Evan Gibbs:

I have definitely a follow-up on the topic and not just but just generally with affinity groups. In terms of having allies coming all the time or sometime, attending the meetings, being members, I've always been – I guess I've sort of felt like – I guess I don't know how much is that accepted, having the allies be a part of the group come into the group. Candidly, for me, as a white male, it seems like a lot of the groups I would sort of might throw the vibe off. You know what? I mean, that's not the best way to phrase it but –

Erin Cannon:

No. I think that's a perfectly reasonable way to phrase it.

Evan Gibbs:

I don't want to make people feel uncomfortable like, “Hey, we came here to associate and talk about things that are specific to this particular affinity group.” Now, there's this older white dude here, and we feel uncomfortable talking about it in front of him or alienating him or something like that. I'm really curious how that works, just generally speaking.

Erin Cannon:

Yes. We leave it up to the affinity group to decide which bases they want to be affinity-specific and which bases that they want to be ally-inclusive. Different groups are going to have different ways and places that they want to include allies, and we are actually currently working through that with each of the affinity groups to figure out where is that balance. Because not only, Evan, to your point, are some people going to feel more or less comfortable having allies in a space at different times. That can be different for different individuals within the same space, right? Some people might want to have allies in a space where others don't feel like they should be in that space. It's a balance that we have to continuously think through as we are trying to give that sense of inclusion and belonging to everyone.

The way that we approach it and I think that a really good way to think about it is to keep those lines of communication open and understand that there is no end point for saying, “Well, this is it. This is the decision. It's written in stone, and that's the way it's going to be forever.” These are moving issues where we are able to change over time based on what people in the group want and need.

Tracey Diamond:

Yes. I had a question similar to that but sort of in terms of advice for our clients who are looking or maybe considering whether to include allies in their own affinity group programs. In your experience, Erin, either at Troutman or before you came to the firm, have you seen companies sort of give some thought and maybe put some guard rails in place in terms of when allies are effective or their limits of what they can be doing within a group, so they're not taking over the group, and it sort of loses its affinity in the first place? I could see that happening, right?

Erin Cannon:

Before I was at Troutman Pepper, I was in a consultancy role. So I did a lot of DEI consulting around this very issue and issues of this nature in lots of different places and lots of different kinds of organizations. I think a common factor for what to think through is exactly what you're saying, Tracey, around what is going to be most effective for the group and how do we stay focused on that.

One tool that I have found to be very effective is to have affinity groups. Within the affinity, before they have allyship involved, have the affinity group have a conversation about how they would like allies to be involved. Does that mean coming to the meetings? Does it mean coming to some of the meetings? Does it mean attending events together? Does it mean inviting them to do a training? I think there are lots of different ways that that can manifest. But it is really important for each group to think about what it means for that group to have allies in that space and to write it down so that they can really see on paper what it means for them and workshop it

over time to make sure that it is something that is going to feel the most inclusive for everyone involved.

To your point, I think one of the underlying points that I think both of you are hitting on here is that affinity groups are for affinities, right? They're for people who share an identity, often an underrepresented background. The idea of having people in that space, regardless of who they are, who make it harder for that affinity group to feel that sense of affinity, it's a struggle. We don't want that, but we can see how it can be tricky, given every individual has a feeling and a thought. We don't want allies to feel like they aren't able to contribute in ways as well. It's just a matter of helping allies to understand what allyship means to each group specifically and how they can participate in that.

Tracey Diamond:

I think it's such an important concept, right? Because if there was issues that are really of concern about inequities, let's say, in the workplace and the affinity groups just talking to themselves, without allies hearing them and potentially people that are in the position to make changes, they're just going to continue to keep talking to themselves, and nothing's going to change.

Erin Cannon:

100% because that's exactly right. They don't have the power necessarily to make that change. So you really do need the people who are in those positions of power to uplift and to amplify in all of those ways. I will also say that we are working on an allyship training, so we are offering an alllyship training here for people at Troutman Pepper who can take that training to understand how to be allies generally, how to be allies in the workplace. Hopefully, as we start to get through some of the specifics of the allyship groups here within our firm, how to be allies to the people in the groups here as well internally.

Evan Gibbs:

I'm curious. With respect to participation in affinity groups, what is your experience just generally as a consultant and currently of group participation in affinity groups? Do you find that most people are – I don't want to say qualified to join the affinity group but share that affinity, that most of them do join the groups. Is the participation rate usually pretty high? I've always been curious about that.

Erin Cannon:

I think it really depends, Evan, and it depends on a lot of factors. One of the things that can be really difficult for people who are from underrepresented backgrounds within an organization is that they know that they are different. They know that people are looking at them from the lens of you are not like most of the people around here consciously or subconsciously. Usually, it's not consciously. But because of that, they can both really feel a need to be in this place where they don't have that feeling of otherness. Also, they can be keenly aware that other people who are from majority groups are maybe watching them to see, “Oh, are they going to go to that place, right?” So there can be a push and pull there.

There can also be a rejection of the idea that I'm here because of my identity, and I just want to get my work done. I don't want to be thinking about my otherness all of the time. So I'm not going to put my energy and effort into an affinity group or into that community because I want to focus on my main job. It can really vary. It depends what the individual wants, and it can also depend on the power dynamics that they have within their organization. For example, here we recently opened up our affinity groups to professional staff, as well as attorneys. We are not seeing quite as many professional staff at this point as we are attorneys. There's a power dynamic there, where professional staff might not feel as safe to join affinity groups or not feel like they have the time or might not know what it means to be part of an affinity group. We're working on that as well.

Tracey Diamond:

Then not only once you get them into the room but also making them feel comfortable speaking out about something that maybe is bothering them, knowing that the “bosses” are in the room with them. I think that creates an interesting dynamic. I'd like to pull in our second clip right now because it's very much apropos for what we were just talking about.

The Cookout was created. Remember, Cookout’s an alliance, and it was created because the six contestants saw similarities in their experiences out in the real world and wanted to help and promote each other, even at the expense of their own individual success. In this next clip, the group discusses their experiences navigating everyday life as a person of color. Particularly, they discussed the idea of unconscious bias.

[CLIP]

Speaker 1:

I come from a predominantly white community, um, so I went to a predominantly white school and people have called me uncivilized because of the country that my mom comes from, South Africa. People have asked me how we have running water in our home in Naperville, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Being here, I'm very mindful of who I represent and with being black, there's definitely a sense of solidarity and camaraderie there. And That's one of the things that I cherish most about my culture and my identity.

Speaker 2:

I used to pull my son out of class because he has gone to predominantly white schools. He feels left out, like, like he stands out when he just wants to blend in sometimes.

Speaker 3:

I've been in that situation where, you know, I've been the only black one in history class that were going over slavery.

Speaker 4:

People saying like, you're like the whitest black guy I knew, but you're saying that because, what, because I'm articulate, because I'm well spoken, because I seem educated, now obviously you're saying, to be black is to also be uneducated.

Speaker 2:

It is so insulting when someone is like, you're so articulate, or, you know.

Speaker 1:

I have had someone tell me, you are well spoken, articulate, eloquent, and pretty for a black girl. Or people will tell me that I'm too white to be black, too black to be Indian, too Indian to be white. Yeah. Yeah. It's a mess.

[END CLIP]

Tracey Diamond:

On this last clip, the contestants talked a lot about this concept of unconscious bias. Erin, can you explain to us what unconscious bias is?

Erin Cannon:

Yes. I want you to take a minute right now and tell me as fast as you can the answer to this question. Two plus two?

Evan Gibbs:

Four.

Tracey Diamond:

Four.

Erin Cannon:

Yes. You were able to do that really quickly, right? You were able to do that really quickly because it's just held in your brain. I'm going to ask you another question. I want you both to answer just as quickly as you can. Picture a genius. Who do you see?

Evan Gibbs:

Albert Einstein.

Tracey Diamond:

A cartoon figure with a light bulb over their head.

Erin Cannon:

I love that, Tracey. Evan, about 80% of people say Albert Einstein. That is the first picture that comes into our head when we think, when we picture a genius. That's not because we think that only people who look like Albert Einstein or who came from Albert Einstein's background can be geniuses. It's because we have seen that so many times. Tracey, in your example as well, right? The light bulb over the head, that's something we've seen so many times that it's just where our brain goes.

It's not bad to have unconscious biases, right? It's not inherently negative because sometimes those things can help us to make quick decisions. They can help us to really pay attention to the things that we need to pay attention to because two plus two is always going to be four. We don't need to ever think about whether or not that's the case. That's always going to be true. When we know that to be true, we can then focus on the things that really take up more of our brain space or need to take up more of our brain space.

The problem is when those unconscious biases are about people because in the case of people, we really do need to pay attention. We really do need to think about what are the decisions that we're making because of the biases or the things in our brains that tell us that something is true. When we think of Einstein first, we are unconsciously thinking about certain backgrounds as being geniuses.

When we are in job interviews, for example, or when we're leading job interviews, for example, we might have somebody who appears to look like maybe they have white frizzy hair. That reminds us of Einstein, and so we have a feeling that, "Oh, they really know what they're talking about." We don't know why, right? It might not have to do with what they're saying but some appearance or some part of them. We really need to think about what are those things that we are unconsciously pushed toward or unconsciously pulled away from in order to be as fair as we can and as equitable as we can in the decisions that we make on a day-to-day basis.

Tracey Diamond:

It's so interesting because it's so hard to get at what's unconscious. To make what's unconscious conscious is a super hard task.

Erin Cannon:

It really is, and it's not possible to get rid of unconscious bias. That's not even the goal. To your point, Tracey, the goal really is to be more thoughtful about these things. I think this is a way that we can all hold each other accountable. It's a way that we can all be allies to each other is to help each other think about those things that we aren't conscious of.

It came to my attention that I said to Evan I'm from Kansas. I grew up in Kansas. Not at ton of people that I come into contact with on an everyday basis are from Kansas. But when I do meet somebody from Kansas, I get kind of this warm fuzzy feeling about them, and I'm just like, "Oh, they're so friendly," or nice or kind. So they might say or do something, and I will give them the benefit of the doubt the way I might not if I'm like, "Oh, that person's from Boston." It's not a conscious thing, but what I can do, even though I can't control that initial feeling that I have, I

can take a beat and make sure that I'm not letting it affect my actions as much as I can. We can help each other in that.

Something that I thought was really interesting about this clip is that you had a group of people talking about something that they all knew about. I felt watching a clip. As somebody who is a brown person, I felt like watching that clip was partially people feeling that affinity with each other. It was partially them setting up and educating the people around them because it really felt to me like that was a responsibility. The people of color from this season felt that they had on their shoulders was to educate people, was to help people in the audience to really understand some of the things that they've gone through because of their backgrounds. I thought that was really interesting to see both of those things playing out at the same time.

Tracey Diamond:

Yes, I agree. I also thought it was interesting. We had to shorten the clip a little bit for purposes of our podcast. But when you listen to the individuals around the table talk about their own experiences and actually just even who they are, so many differences within them, when a lot of folks from the outside are looking at them as the contestant of color and sort of lumping them all into one group. They're all completely different, individual unique experience completely different from the other. It's sort of like having kids, and you look at your kids, and each kid that you have is completely different from the other kid. It kind of made think of that. Yes.

Erin Cannon:

It really is. It really is, Tracey. I'm interracial, and my dad is white. One of the things that has been really interesting for me as an adult person to learn about my dad is the way that he learned to see the world through his brown children, right? Before he had brown children, he had one idea about the world and about safety, et cetera. After having brown children, he had a different idea that kind of came into play over time. I think something that is really interesting about that lens of what people from the outside see and what people who are around a table see is that it doesn't really matter. Or it can matter less what people around a table think if they don't have the power, right?

Just to what you were saying about allyship before, what can matter, especially when it comes to safety, is what people from the outside, people who are in the positions of power see in that situation. Yes, you can have all of these different backgrounds and all these different identities in one place, and that can be so uplifting in that space. It can also not matter at all if you're thinking about who has the power in a situation.

Tracey Diamond:

The Cookout alliance was not without controversy. There were some who complained that it was a form of reverse racism. After the show, The Cookout contestants came together as often contestants do after a reality TV show to talk about their alliance and to address those allegations specifically. Let's take a listen.

[CLIP]

Interviewer:

I think that we understand the reason and other people have stepped up to refute this, but there have been a lot of articles and comments saying that the cookout was reverse racism. What would you say? I'm gonna ask you, what would you say about that?

Contestant:

The first thing I'm going to say is, um, reverse racism does not exist. It's literally impossible to happen.

Um, the second thing I'm going to say is if people do feel bad, I would like them to ask those questions to the jurors who met us with nothing but love, uh, when we all met them and, um, at the final time in jury. Um, we all came here with what we said was a mission. Um, it wasn't based off of, okay, you're black, get out.

No, it was based off of, we would like to achieve an African American winner to be achieved in history. And, um, the fact that it resonated with so many people. Beyond color, creed, origin and everything just speaks to show that this wasn't a season about setting a division. It was the season about showing the powerfulness of unity and what can happen when we all work together.

[END CLIP]

Tracey Diamond:

I do want to start by saying that the one contestant said that there is no such thing as reverse racism, and I don't agree with that comment, particularly when you – I don't know about racism. But if you're going to call it reverse discrimination, there is a legal theory behind the concept of reverse discrimination. I know of many successful lawsuits claiming reverse discrimination. I just wanted to say that upfront.

In a corporate environment, are there limits to what a company can do to ensure that their employees who are from diverse backgrounds are successful? Particularly in light of the recent Supreme Court cases that have really kind of taken a hammer to some corporate DEI programs. Or I should say it didn't even start out as corporate DEI programs. The case has nothing to do with corporate DEI programs, but it seems to have had a big effect on these programs. What do you think about that, Erin?

Erin Cannon:

Yes. Let me first make a comment to your comment which is I think discrimination is real and can go across all backgrounds. The difference between discrimination and reverse racism, as you're saying, Tracey, is that racism is dependent on two things. It's dependent on prejudice, as well as power. That's why when that contestant said there's no such thing as reverse racism, that's the dynamic that she was talking about. She wasn't saying, "Oh, I don't know what she –"

That's the dynamic that comes into play when talking about racism is that it's prejudice plus power.

When we're talking about discrimination, there can absolutely be discrimination in any situation based on anybody's background, whether or not they're from a majority group. It's just the term racism specifically that that was about. In terms of what these decisions around discrimination mean for workplace DEI programs, it's really interesting. In particular, I think it's interesting in law because in law, we are risk-averse in ways, right? We want to think about all of the ways that we can be thoughtful and ahead of time so that we're not taking major risks or doing something that might get us into trouble behind the scenes.

Evan Gibbs:

That's putting it mildly, yes.

Tracey Diamond:

Yes.

Erin Cannon:

Yes. I think that one of the things that we saw when the Supreme Court decision came out was this desire to move toward that risk aversion. It was to look at what are the things that we are doing that might be seen as discriminatory that we don't want to deal with that we don't want to be put in that position. I think we are I don't want to say lucky. I think we have been thoughtful about the way that we approach DEI at Troutman Pepper in that we have always been really focused on inclusion. When you're focused on inclusion, it's not about specific people from specific backgrounds. It really is about every individual.

That in and of itself means that we could be a little bit I don't want to say rest easy because we still did what everybody else did which was look at every single program that we had that was related to DEI and look at the risk and weigh what we were doing, change some language, et cetera. But we are able to say, “You know what? We continue to do the thing that we were planning on doing which was just to be as inclusive as we can to people of all backgrounds.”

When people in the space, when people in law firms, when people in organizations are thinking about DEI with that lens of inclusion and equity first, then they don't have to worry as much about is the diversity piece the thing that is going to get them in trouble.

Tracey Diamond:

Just to give us a little bit of background here, I should have done this first, was just for our listeners that don't know what we're talking about, last year, the Supreme Court ruled in a pair of cases called Students for Fair Admissions Versus Harvard and Students for Fair Admissions Versus UNC. That the use of race as a plus factor in the admissions process for those schools was a violation of the Equal Protection Clause or the 14th Amendment and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

The Supreme Court decision itself, and I alluded to this earlier, the decision itself does not have a direct legal impact on employment laws that govern employers' decisions regarding applicants and employees to work in the workplace or their DEI efforts for that matter. But there have been some practical impacts. Since the Supreme Court's ruling, there's been increased scrutiny and also legal challenges to many companies' DEI efforts and several of targeted other law firms not ours from what I understand so far. The attorney generals of 13 states warned 14 Fortune 100 CEOs of serious legal consequences over race-based employment preferences and diversity policies. In response to that, 21 other attorney generals sent a letter supporting these companies' DEI initiatives. Then various legal groups expressed concerns to the EEOC over companies' DEI programs.

In light of all that is really kind of where you're coming from, I believe, Erin, in terms of that focus on inclusion and belonging kind of keeps you out of hot water and also gets us where we want to be and where we were planning all along to be in terms of creating an inclusive environment for everyone.

Erin Cannon:

That's exactly right. It is really interesting to me to think about how *Big Brother* in the generic sense is playing out in DEI right now, right? We have these different areas of impact that are coming for DEI. Some are saying we're not doing enough. Others are saying we're doing too much. Others are saying we shouldn't be doing anything, right? It's really interesting to be in the space of having these *Big Brother* sort of entities driving what's going on on the ground for all of these areas within law, within higher education, et cetera. You probably planned that, but it's just occurring to me.

Tracey Diamond:

You're giving me way too much credit, but I do think that there are so many layers to the things that we've been discussing today, and it is such a nuanced conversation. Just in the last couple of weeks, I was at our firm's executive women's forum where we invite female executive clients and prospective clients to a two-day event. That is one of my favorite events of the year because it's just so inspiring to be around all of these like-minded women who are doing some really wonderful things for their companies.

Then I also went on a walking tour event of Princeton University with our Women's Network Affinity Group. That included attorneys and staff of our Princeton office, just internal Troutman people. It was just an informal way to do something together and have fun. It was also a really wonderful event. Both of those things are under the rubric of our firm's DEI programs and both of them were really very inspiring events.

Erin Cannon:

Well, I'm glad. Now, you give me too much credit because while we are here, my team is here to support the things that we want to do as a firm in light of inclusion efforts that we listen to what people bring to us, right? We need the partnership of people within the firm to come to us and say, "These are the things that we think will be impactful," so that we can know what to do. There's only five of us on my team, right? There are thousands of people in this firm. Making

sure that we have those partnerships and that have those places and we are able to get more out and we are able to help to steer the ship toward that inclusive culture together.

Tracey Diamond:

At the end of the day, The Cookout alliance actually really opened the door. The following season saw its first black female winner of the *Big Brother* TV show. It's been an interesting journey to watch for sure. Well, I think this is a topic that we could probably go on and on and on and on about, Erin. I know you're very busy with your team of five and the thousands of us, but we very much appreciate your time today.

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